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SIPDIS

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NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#) [JA](#) [NO](#) [EU](#) [IN](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Sri Lanka: Upcoming meeting of the Co-Chairs  
of the Tokyo Process in Brussels

Refs: Colombo 827, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.  
Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 1, the four Co-Chairs (Norway, Japan, the U.S., and EU) of the Tokyo Process are scheduled to meet in Brussels. The meeting is an important one and will build on recent visits to Sri Lanka by the Norwegian facilitators, GoJ Special Envoy Akashi, and SA A/S Rocca. Recent news regarding the peace process has been largely positive, with the GSL and the LTTE underscoring their interest in resuming talks later this year. That said, the situation is fragile due to political instability in the south and the difficulty of dealing with the LTTE given its continuing track record of aggressive behavior. In the meantime, on the assistance side activities in the North and East slowed down in the lead up to elections and period of conflict between the LTTE and the Karuna faction. These activities have now resumed. However, to make an impact in the near to medium term, the number of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation activities need to increase, speed up and be better coordinated to demonstrate wider impact. This will require additional donor mechanisms such as a NERF-like funding scheme.

2. (C) SUMMARY (Continued): We believe that the June 1 meeting should send a strong signal of international support for the peace process, especially for the parties' declared commitment to resuming talks. Participants should also call for strict adherence to the ceasefire. At the same time, the LTTE should be urged to act responsibly and to respect human rights fully. In light of both sides' public commitment to resume talks, Co-Chairs should call for an acceleration of relief and rehabilitation assistance delivery to the north and east while noting that full-scale reconstruction awaits progress in the peace talks. Overall, we think a strong message of international backing for the positive trends tentatively emerging in Sri Lanka can play a key role in convincing the parties to return to the negotiating table and make substantive progress there. END SUMMARY.

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Review of Current Situation  
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3. (C) The four Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Process are scheduled to meet in Brussels on June 1. The meeting is an important one, and it will build on recent visits to Sri Lanka by Norwegian FM Petersen and deputy FM Helgesen, Japanese Special Envoy Akashi, and A/S Rocca (see Reftels). The news regarding the peace process is largely positive, based on the results of those visits. Sri Lankan government interlocutors, including President Kumaratunga, for example, reiterated their interest in resuming talks later this year. (Talks have been on hold since April 2003.) In meetings with the Norwegians and the Japanese, the Tigers also said they were on board for eventual talks. The Norwegians have made clear that arranging negotiations will take at least several months. While the exact agenda of possible talks has not yet been set, the GSL appears to have agreed to LTTE demands to confine initial discussions to the issue of how to come to an interim agreement on power-sharing in the north and east, as well as how to accelerate assistance to those in need. Discussion of a possible final settlement would take place further down the line.

4. (C) Despite the generally good news on the peace front, there are still many potential obstacles to real progress. The political situation in the south is confusing and volatile, for example. Based on the results of the recent election, parties that are skeptical of the peace process, such as the radical JVP and the JHU (led by Buddhist monks), have entered Parliament in large numbers. At the same time, the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the other extreme, is also represented in Parliament in unprecedented

numbers. Moreover, it remains unclear whether the United National Party (UNP), the main opposition party, will play ball with the government. Although the UNP launched the peace process in 2001, it may be so resentful of its recent defeat in the parliamentary election that it will seek to undermine the government any chance it gets. Finally, the government, which remains in minority status in Parliament, continues to give off hints that it may try to change the Constitution to get rid of the executive presidency in favor of a full-fledged Westminster-type system. (President Kumaratunga faces term-limits in 2005-2006 and wants to remain in control as prime minister.) If the GSL moves forward with this idea, it will create a flashpoint of controversy, which will probably work to put the peace process on the back burner for some time.

15. (C) The LTTE remains a serious obstacle for the peace process. As mentioned, the group has made the right soundings about wanting to get back to talks. That said, its behavior on the ground continues to be poor. Killings of Tiger opponents continue and harassment is endemic, and child recruitment has begun again. Emblematic of the LTTE's recent behavior was its brazen and successful effort to fix the election of TNA candidates in the recent election. Given this track record, it is difficult to say with a high degree of certainty how serious the Tigers are about moving forward on peace negotiations. Nonetheless, the group seems to feel that it is getting what it wants from the peace process at this time and there are no reports that it wants to break out of the current situation.

16. (C) On the assistance side, the election clearly indicated that the Sri Lankan people wanted a greater demonstration of the tangible benefits of peace. In order for this impact to be realized, greater planning and coordination among donors and between donors and the GSL, at the national, provincial and district levels is needed to assure that the most appropriate assistance is targeted to the areas in greatest need in the most timely manner. Both the Government and the LTTE need to be encouraged to make progress on key indicators laid out in the Tokyo declaration to ensure that the funds pledged to meet the development needs of Sri Lanka are released.

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Calibrating the Message in Brussels  
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17. (C) As was done during their February 17 meeting in Washington, we believe that the Co-Chairs should use the June 1 meeting to send a strong signal of international support for the peace process, as well as call for strict adherence to the ceasefire. Parties should be urged to resume talks in a structured, rational way, and in a timely manner. While it was positive that the April parliamentary elections were the most peaceful in years, it is also important that the parties in the south try to bridge differences and work together in the national interest. Both sides need to avoid inflammatory rhetoric and appeals based on ethnic and religious intolerance, so as not to undermine the gains made by the peace process over the past two and a half years.

18. (C) Regarding the LTTE, the group should be urged to act responsibly and to stop the killings, abductions, harassment, child recruitment, etc. In addition, it is imperative that international and local implementing partners are able to function independently and without fear or intimidation in providing assistance. The LTTE must understand that its pattern of behavior has been the single most important reason that donors have been unable to provide increased developmental assistance to the north and east. Nonetheless, given recent positive signals about a possible resumption of talks, the Co-Chairs should underscore that they believe that the delivery of relief and rehabilitation (humanitarian) assistance should be accelerated to all needy areas of Sri Lanka, especially the north and east, while noting that full-scale assistance will require further progress in the peace talks, as laid out in the Tokyo Declaration. The Co-Chairs should also call on the GSL to organize itself effectively so that assistance delivery can be provided expeditiously and equitably to those in need.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Overall, we think a strong message of international backing for the positive trends emerging in Sri Lanka can play a key role in convincing the

parties to return to the negotiating table and make progress there. Coming after the recent visits by Petersen, Akashi, and A/S Rocca and this week's Solheim visit, which closely followed the April election, the June 1 meeting is well-timed to deliver this signal of international resolve.

¶10. (C) COMMENT (Continued): At the same time, the June 1 meeting comes at an important time in South Asia given the recent Indian elections. Although there is no indication that the new government in New Delhi plans any shift way from its support for Sri Lanka's peace process, the abrupt change in power has been somewhat disconcerting to many in Sri Lanka. Many observers, for example, feel that the Congress Party takes a more hard-line view on how to deal with the LTTE (given the 1991 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE). By again publicly underscoring their support for the peace process, the Co-Chairs will assure Sri Lankans that the international community continues to back the process. By doing so, the Co-Chairs will also be sending a gentle, indirect message to India that it should remain on board with its own support. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD